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*What Gunpowder Plot Was.* By SAMUEL RAWSON GARDINER, D.C.L., LL.D. (London, New York, Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co. 1897. Pp. viii, 208.)

THE orthodox version of the Gunpowder Plot was formulated in 1857 by David Jardine. Since that time but little new evidence has been collected. A life of Everard Digby has been written, and Neut in 1876 and Father Pollen in 1888 have discussed Father Garnet's relation to the conspiracy. But in spite of this lack of new evidence we have now a reconsideration of the general question, in which Father Gerard in *What was the Gunpowder Plot?* brings a mass of negative criticism to bear upon the traditional story, and elicits a rejoinder from Professor Gardiner in *What Gunpowder Plot was.* It is not clear upon whom in this case the burden of proof will fall, both parties attempting to shift the responsibility under plea of the dangers of hypothetical reasoning.

In the old version of the story two problems were presented to the student, both of which were at bottom questions as to the character of the parties to the plot: who was the author of the Monteagle letter, Mrs. Abington, Anne Vaux, or Francis Tresham, and who were the authors of the plot, the conspirators, the Jesuits, or the government. We appear to be as far as ever from their solution. We have not gained much light from our discussions of the characters of the parties. Father Gerard and Professor Gardiner have therefore wisely turned our attention to the nature of the evidence—wisely, for until the work of Foley, Morris and Law has been supplemented by lives of Tresham, Garnet and Cecil, and the publication of the Stonyhurst MSS., the question as to the morals of the conspirators real or pretended can hardly be determined. We are now asked what does the evidence show relative to the government's previous knowledge of the plot, and what does it suggest regarding the government's implication in the plot. And here a general criticism may be made, that while Father Gerard argues the unreliability of a document because of the falsity of one item, Professor Gardiner would argue (p. 39) the reliability of the document from the truth of one item. Three classes of evidence are in question: (1) the letters, depositions, and memorials connected with the examinations and trials, now embodied in the Gunpowder Plot Book; (2) official publications before and after the trials, the King's Book, etc.; and (3) other contemporary accounts. The first source is of greatest value as to matters of fact, and it is therefore over this that the debate is warmest. Professor Gardiner draws particular attention to the examinations of Fawkes. He appears, however, to admit (p. 51) that the government did not obtain all its early information from this source, and his statement that it would have been impossible for Salisbury to falsify examinations of prisoners without the connivance of the Catholic commissioners (p. 75) seems most arbitrary. On the other hand, what is to be said of Jardine's claim that precisely those papers which constitute the most important evidence against Garnet and the other Jesuits are missing? As to the value of the second source, im-

portant in its bearing upon the motives of the government, all are agreed. The value of the third source appears to be underestimated. We should like to see, for example, a consideration of the statement that the conspirators took the title of the Assertors of Liberty, and of King James's assertion that a certain form of prayer was set down and used among English Catholics for the good success of that great errand, the conspiracy.

We must content ourselves with this general summary of the status of the question, and conclude by expressing our belief that Father Gerard has succeeded in placing the question upon a historical basis. It was proper for Coke and Jeffries to start their investigations with a hypothesis, but it will hardly do for historians, whatever the sanctions of the hypothesis. We are convinced also that it has been shown that the ends of the government were more than the simple ends of justice, and that although many objections have been successfully met by Professor Gardiner, in the main contention Father Gerard is right: we do not know the history of the plot, that is, we do not know all about it (Gerard 708), which is much of a platitude after all.

W. D. JOHNSTON.

*Histoire Générale du IV<sup>e</sup> Siècle à nos Jours.* Publiée sous la direction de MM. ERNEST LAVISSE et ALFRED RAMBAUD. Tome VII. Le XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle (1715-1788). (Paris: Armand Colin et Cie. 1896. Pp. 1051.)

*Periods of European History. Period VI.* The Balance of Power, (1715-1789). By ARTHUR HASSALL, M.A. (New York: The Macmillan Co. 1896. Pp. viii, 433.)

THE eighteenth century has suffered much at the hands of historians. Writers whose eyes are fixed upon the political and material progress of the nineteenth century have been wont to look at the great French Revolution as commencing the era of popular government in Europe and have never wearied in drawing a contrast between the more advanced and more general civilization of the present century, which is, after all, largely the result of modern inventions and improved means of communication, and that of its predecessor. To the political thinker the eighteenth century, with its absolute governments, its cynical statesmen, and its selfish wars, is only made tolerable by the rise towards its close of the spirit of popular liberty, made manifest in the American Revolution. To the economist, it is a century of hide-bound prejudice, retarding the growth of the world's prosperity. To the student of society, it is not even relieved by the writings of Rousseau and the work of Howard from being the period in which the line between classes was most distinctly drawn and when the rich and noble were most careless and contemptuous of the poor and humble. It is a truism among writers that the eighteenth century has all the characteristics, moral, material, and political, of a decaying age, in which old systems and old ideas which have ex-